

# From 25 Years Ago, Conor Cruise O'Brien, On the Subject of Salman Rushdie, a Fatwa, and How One Attains "Harmony" with Islam

*It might be good to have the most telling portions of this article translated into French, and re-circulated, as widely as possible. And if the Independent, and other outlets, had any brains, and any guts, they would be republishing it, within the week.*

<http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/islam-back-to-the-dark-ages-we-should-not-repeal-the-enlightenment-to-appease-ayatollahs-says-conor-cruise-obrien-1382946.html>

"Islam: Back to the Dark Ages: We Should Not Repeal the Enlightenment to Appease Ayatollahs, Says Conor Cruise O'Brien".

'Friday 12 August 1994.

'THE ECONOMIST has devoted more than 30 columns to a 'survey' on the subject of how to love fundamentalist Islam.

'As I realise that I stand in need of instruction on this subject, I read the survey with interest.

'Specifically, I was curious to read what it would say about the fatwa sentencing Salman Rushdie to death.

'I thought it would be difficult to avoid this topic in any sustained discussion of the relationship between fundamentalist Islam (*that is: pure Islam, real Islam, classical Islam, or simply, to cut the cr\*p and get right to*

*the point, ISLAM – CM) and the West.*

'Difficult, but not impossible, as I found when I had ploughed my way through that survey.

"Not a word about Salman Rushdie, unless perhaps we are to understand his case somehow to be subsumed in the following paragraph about the case of Iran, in the context of the hope for 'harmony' between the West and fundamentalist Islam:

"The hope (of harmony) even survived the Iranian revolution of 1979...Iran's revolutionaries started out as snarling enemies. They can still growl and bite. But time, and the sobering experience of government, have made them noticeably milder in their foreign policy as well as in what they do at home."

'This is the sort of thing that British and French devotees of appeasement used to write in the mid-Thirties. "Time, and the sobering experience of government", were forever about to do wonders for Adolf Hitler, and we may be sure that these factors will exert an equally chastening influence on the character and disposition of Ayatollah Khomeini.

'To say that the Iranian regime has got 'noticeably milder' is not just untrue; it is the reverse of the truth. The regime in Iran is getting noticeably more ferocious, as the recent bombings of Jewish targets in London and Buenos Aires attest.

'The Argentine authorities at least have no doubt as to the origin of that bombing that took the lives of nearly 100 people in Buenos Aires. They believe that the atrocity was planned in the Iranian embassy in the city, on the orders of Ayatollah Khamenei, chief religious authority in Iran and also Minister for the Interior.

**'There is no distinction, in Islam, between the spheres of religion and politics, and no terrestrial limit to the dual jurisdiction of such an official. For infidels to seek 'harmony' with Islam is an illusion. The only way of attaining**

**harmony with Islam is by conversion.**

*Let all those fools, warbling about 'unity' in France this past week, take note. They need to be slapped in the face with Conor Cruise O'Brien's brisk Irish commonsense. – CM*

'The Economist seems to think that this might not be too bad an idea.

'According to the survey, "...Islam claims to be an idea based upon a transcendant certainty. The certainty is the word of God, revealed syllable by syllable to Mohamed in a dusty corner of Arabia 1400 years ago and copied down in the Koran. As a means of binding a civilisation together there is no substitute for such a certainty."

**'Is there not? If so, the West, and Britain in particular, are in quite a bad way, as compared at least with the civilisation of the Muslim world, whose rulers are happily bound together by Islamic certainty.'**

ROFLMAO. – CM

'The survey goes on to discuss the important thing that is in common between the West and fundamentalist Islam. The thing is religion, which should link rather than divide Western civilisation and the Islamic variety. "Both have their origins in religions that believe in a single God, and any Westerner who asks what that has to do with modern life needs to think about what made the West as it is today".

*Seeing the author of that 'Economist' article burble on about 'religion' and 'a single God' (the 'monotheism' canard so much beloved of interfaith dawa-peddling Muslims) in order to blur the distinction between Jews and Christians – whose faith did in fact, all things considered, do quite a lot to make the west what it is – and Islam, whose main contribution to the West was to spend centuries continually attacking it and damaging it both economically and intellectually (see Emmet*

*Scott's magnum opus, 'Mohammed and Charlemagne Revisited', for details on the extent of the wounds inflicted by Islam) makes one realize just exactly why Jacques Ellul, at about the same time, in the early 1990s, felt it necessary to write his brilliant essay "Les Trois Piliers du Conformisme", tackling and demolishing the exact same canard. Conor Cruise O'Brien, staunchly anti-clerical lapsed Catholic that he is, takes a slightly different tack to that taken by Ellul, but no less bracing, for all that. – CM*

*'I had thought that the Enlightenment, that potent dispeller of illusory certainties, had more to do with 'what made the West as it is today' than had the Age of Faith.*

**'I had also thought that the fact that the Islamic world is still stuck in the Age of Faith, and apparently determined to get stuck still deeper in it, had something to do with the present not altogether enviable mental and material condition of the inhabitants of the Islamic world.**

*Pace O'Brien at this point, the misery of the Muslim world is not simply due to 'faith' as such. Even in the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, the Christian West was steadily forging ahead of Islam in the arts and music, in technology, in thinking about government, in the slow social outworking of the institution of monogamous marriage, and in the fizz and sizzle of debate in the multiplying Universities. The misery of the Muslim world is caused by a very particular 'faith'; by the total and totalitarian belief system, centred on a 'pantheism of force' (as one astute 19th century scholar described it), on an apotheosis of despotism and unreason, that is Islam. – CM*

**'The Economist, however, implies that we would do well to repeal the Enlightenment in order to attain the bliss of harmony with the likes of Ayatollah Khamenei.**

**'Readers will make up their minds as to whether or not this**

would be a good bargain...".

'I suspect that the Economist, when it writes in this lofty strain about religion, history and civilisation, may really be thinking about oil and money. That is its proper sphere, after all.'

*Having thus hinted at the influence wielded by petrodollars upon organs such as The Economist, Conor Cruise O'Brien then proceeds to mention certain very foolish moves made by the Catholic church at that time, to seek the Muslims as allies for furthering a couple of moral and social agendas (abortion, and contraception), and wonders whether the Catholics might not also be admiring of Muslim blasphemy laws and intending to seek a revival of blasphemy laws in the West. At that point his old-fashioned anticlericalism – his willingness to believe that the Catholic Church of the 1990s had in mind "the repeal of the Enlightenment, with the aid of Islam" – perhaps kept him from seeing who was making use of whom; or that there were quite other agencies of western society, separate from the church and even hostile toward it, that Muslims would coopt and corrupt, make use of, in a sort of ju-jitsu, in order to bring about a de facto conformity with the sharia blasphemy law, by a total silencing of almost all public criticism and mockery of Islam. And if the very bravest dare to breach that silence – Theo Van Gogh, and 'Charlie Hebdo' – the sharia enforcers, from within the Muslim fifth column now established within the west – will move to snuff them out.*

*It is impossible to imagine that any secular newspaper in the West would dare to publish, today, what The Times, on the 11 May 1989, was still able to publish: the expressed opinion of Conor Cruise O'Brien himself, on the subject of Islam and Islamophiles. I will reproduce it here, in the hope that some UK reader might be able to track down and unearth the whole of the article from which these two acid paragraphs are excerpted. For the assistance of any such intrepid researcher, here is the title of the article – "Sick Man of*

the World: Conor Cruise O'Brien Reviews a Sharp Book of Disobliging Truths About the State of Islam".

**"Muslim society looks profoundly repulsive...It looks profoundly repulsive because it is repulsive..**

**"A Westerner who claims to admire Muslim society, whilst still adhering to Western values, is either a hypocrite or an ignoramus, or a bit of both. At the heart of the matter is the Muslim family, an abominable institution....**

**"...Arab and Muslim society is sick, and has been sick for a long time. In the last century, the Arab [sic] thinker Jamal al-Afghani wrote: "Every Muslim is sick, and his only remedy is in the Koran." Unfortunately, the sickness gets worse, the more the remedy is taken."**